has been bringing the matter to the notice of appropriate authorities. Such cases of diversion as reported to the Government are investigated by the Ministry of Finance.

(c) and (d). Recently on a report of diversion of consignment of coffee meant for export to Russia under the debt repayment track, the Coffee Board has taken the following remedial steps on immediate basis:-

(i) All the exporters who have shipped coffee to Russia after 1.4.96 were requested to furnish corresponding landing certificates along with customs clearance certificates;

(ii) The exporters were also warned not to divert coffee from the destinations mentioned in the permits;

(iii) The exporters were further requested not to use the balance permits issued to them by the Board for export to Russia until they furnish landing proof for all the quantity for which proof of export had been submitted;

(iv) All the major ports and customs authorities have been requested by the Board not to allow any shipments to Russia without prior clearance from the Coffee Board. A list of pending permits along with exporterwise details were also furnished to the port authorities;

Moreover, it has also been informed by the Coffee Board that hence-forth the Board is stipulating on the permits as well as on the certificate of origin that the "Country of destination not changeable to other than the country of destination for which the permit was issued. The Board has also made it mandatory that exporters shall furnish landing certificates with customs clearance certificates for all exports meant for Russia under the debt repayment route.

In addition, the Government of India also contemplates the following remedial measures for preventing diversion of export consignments meant for Russia under the debt repayment track:-

(i) Export through consignment sales by way of customs bonded warehouses;

(ii) Working towards a bilateral agreement between India and Russian on Cooperation and Mutual Assistance in Customs matters;

(iii) insistence on the Russian side for providing satisfactory proof of landing.

The Government of Russian Federation has also introduced a new scheme called the "Passbook Scheme for Import" for preventing loss of revenue due to switch trade and this measure is expected to curb diversion of export consignments meant for Russia.

(a) and (f). The need for effective monitoring and greater cooperation in these matters was emphasized by the Indian side through diplomatic channels and the Russian side have promised to cooperate in the matter. Moreover, finalisation of the proposed bilateral agreement between India and Russia for Cooperation and Mutual Assistance in customs matters is expected to contribute to the resolution of the problems in this regard to a significant extent.

Cost of Production of Cement

4494. DR. KRUPASINDHU BHOI: Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to reduce the cost of production of cement industry;

(b) if so, the steps being taken in this regard;

(c) the steps being taken to increase the production of cement; and

(d) the target fixed for the Eighth Plan?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) and (b). While there is no specific Government programme to reduce the cost of production of cement, Government is encouraging research and development, modernisation, upgradation of technology, improvement of fuel efficiency etc. which result in higher productivity and reduction in cost of production.

(c) Cement Industry has been delicensed and decontrolled. The industry has been put in the priority list for foreign investment and technical collaboration. Two lines of Credit of the World Bank extended to the Cement Industry have resulted in substantial addition to the installed capacity and modernisation of the cement industry. The industry has been made eligible for ADB line of Credit provided recently. Government is also providing coal linkage and allocating rail wagons to the industry on a priority basis.

(d) A production target of 76 million tonnes of cement has been fixed for the terminal year of the Eighth Five Year Plan.

Programmes for Backward Areas

4495. SHRI N. DENNIS: Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have evolved programmes for the industrialisation of rural and backward areas; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?